

THE
REFORMATION
JUSTIFY'D:
IN A
SERMON

Preached at
GUILD-HALL CHAPPEL
Septemb. 21. 1673.

Before the
Lord Major
AND
ALDERMEN, &c.

By EDW. STILLINGFLEET, D. D. Chaplain in
Ordinary to His MAJESTY.

LONDON,

Printed, by *Robert White*, for *Henry Mortlock*, and are to be sold
at the White Hart in *Westminster Hall*, and at the Phoenix
in *St. Pauls Church-yard.* 1674.

Handson Major.

*Cur. special. tent. in Festo S. Michaelis Archang. 1673. Annoq;
Regis Caroli secundi Angliae, &c. xxv.*

IT is Ordered by this Court, that
D^r Stillingfleet be earnestly desired
to Print his **SERMON** lately Preached
at the **GUILD-HALL CHAPPEL**
before the **LORD MAJOR** and
ALDERMEN of this **CITY**.

Wagstaffe.

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REFORMATION

IN A

STATION

OLD CHURCH

Lord

AND

THE

OF

THE



ACTS XXIV. 14.

But this I confesse unto thee, that after the way which they call heresie, so worship I the God of my Fathers, believing all things which are written in the Law and the Prophets.



IN the beginning of this Chapter we find St. Paul brought to his Tryal before Felix the Roman Governour, wherein (if we only except the unfitnes of the Judge) all other things concurred, which could make such an action considerable, viz. the greatness of the cause, the quality of the persons, and the skill which was shewed in the management of it. The cause was not common and ordinary, such as were wont to be tryed before the Governours of Provinces, but of an unusual and publick nature;

B 3

ture;

Act. 18. 15. ture ; not a question of words and names, as Gallio thought it, but of a matter of the highest importance to the world : which being managed by St. Paul, with that zeal and industry, which was agreeable to it, gave occasion to his malicious Countreymen to accuse him before the Roman Governour, as one guilty of Faction and Sedition. Under this colour, they hoped easily to gain the Governours good will to their design ; being a person that more regarded the quiet of his Province, than all the concernments of Truth and Religion. But that this design might be carried on with the greater pomp and shew of Justice and Piety, they do not commit the care of it to the rage of the people, or some furious Zealots ; but the

Ver. 1. *High Priest* and some members of the *Sanhedrin* go down on purpose from *Hierusalem* to *Casarea*, and carry with them one of their most eloquent *Advocates* called *Tertullus* to manage the accusation against Paul. Who was no sooner called forth, but the Orator begins to shew his art, by a flattering insinuation, which is most apt to prevail with men of mean and corrupt minds ; Seeing that

Ver. 2, 3. *by thee, saith he, we enjoy great quietness, and that very worthy deeds are done unto this Nation*
by

by thy providence ; we accept it alwayes and in all places, most noble Felix , with all thankfulness : Having thus prepared his Judge, he presently falls upon the matter , and charges St. Paul with being a pestilent and seditious person , a disturber of his Nation in all parts, a prophaner of the Temple ; but the main point of all , and in which the rest were comprehended, was, that *he was a ring-leader of the Sect of the Nazarenes.* (So the Christians were then called among the Jews, from our Saviour's abode in the Town of Nazareth.) But although the Writer of this History gives us only the short heads of his accusation ; yet we may easily suppose by St. Pauls answer , that he insisted more largely on this , than on any of the rest : representing to Felix , " That when the " Jewish Church had been at first established by God himself under Laws of " his own making, when he had so settled " the several orders and degrees of men " among them , that the Priests lips were to " preserve knowledge, and the Law to be sought " at their mouths ; when under this Government, their Religion had been preserved " for many hundreds of years, and after " many revolutions they enjoyed one common " mon

Ver. 5, 6.

Mal. 2. 7.

" mon and publick Worship among them,
 " though there were several distinct Orders
 " of Religious men (such as the *Pharisees*
 " and *Essens*), yet all agreed in the same
 " Divine Worship ; but now at last to their
 " great regret and horror appears one *Jesus*
 " of *Nazareth*, a person of obscure paren-
 " tage and mean education, who pretend-
 " ed to discover many corruptions in the
 " doctrine and practices of our best men ;
 " and without any Authority from the High
 " Priest or *Sanhedrim* he gathered Disciples,
 " and drew multitudes of people after him ;
 " till at last the wisdom of our Governours
 " thought it fit to take him off, and make
 " him an example for *Reformers* ; notwith-
 " standing this, his bold and forward Disci-
 " ples after his death carried on the same
 Heb. 9. 10. " design, pretending that *the time of Reforma-*
 " *tion was come* ; and accordingly have form-
 " ed themselves into a Sect, vigorous and
 " active, of high pretences, and dangerous
 " designs, which if it continues and increases
 " can end in nothing short of the ruine of
 " our *antient Jewish Catholick Church* ; which
 " hath had so constant and visible a Succes-
 " sion in all Ages ; that hath had so many
 " Martyrs and Confessors in it ; so many
 " Devout

"Devout and Religious Persons as the *Pha-*
 "risees are; so excellent an Order and Go-
 "verment, so much unity and peace before
 "this new Sect of *Nazarenes* arose in oppo-
 "sition to that Authority with which God
 "had invested the High Priest and Rulers of
 "the People. And among all the pro-
 "moters of this *new Sect*, there is none more
 "factious and busie than this *Paul* whom *we*
 "here accuse; and *whom some of our Nation*
 "found in the Temple profaning of it, and there
 "we would presently out of meer zeal to
 "our Religion have taken and destroyed;
 "but he was violently rescued out of our
 "hands, and sent hither to be tryed; and
 "these things, which I have spoken, is the
 "sense of all those who are come down as
 "witnesses; for so we read, v. 9. *And the*
Jews also assented and said, that these things were
so. St. Paul being thus accused, and having
 leave given him to answer for himself, was
 so far from being daunted by the greatness Ver. 10.
 of his enemies, or the vehemency of their
 accusation, that he tells the Governour, that
 he did *with all cheerfulness* undertake his
 defence: and there being two parts of his
 accusation, 1. His tumultuous and profane
 carriage in the Temple; this he utterly de-
 nies,

nies, v. 11, 12, 13. and plainly tells them, they can never prove it against him. 2. But as to the other and main part of the Charge, his being a *ringleader of the Sect of the Nazarenes*; although he would not, out of his great modesty, take upon himself to be one of the Heads or Chiefs among them, yet as to the owning of that way, notwithstanding all the imputations they had cast upon it, he doth it with the greatest freedom and courage in the presence of his Judge and Accusers; and not only so, but defends himself therein, that he had done nothing contrary to the Laws of God, or the most antient Religion of his Countrey: all which particulars are contained in the words of the Text; *But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresie, so worship I the God of my Fathers, believing all things which are written in the Law and the Prophets.*

Wherein we have these three things considerable.

1. The Imputation which Christianity suffered under in its first appearance: *After the way, which they call heresie.*

2. The Way taken by St. Paul to remove this false Imputation; *viz. by appeal to Scripture*

Scripture and Antiquity ; So *worship I the God of my Fathers , believing all things that are written in the Law and the Prophets.*

3. The Courage of St. Paul in so freely owning his Religion in the presence of his greatest enemies , and when they were in hopes to destroy him for it: *This I confess unto thee, that after the way, &c.*

1. I begin with the false Imputation which Christianity suffered under at its first appearance ; *After the way which is called heresie ;* the same Word which is translated *Seet*, v. 5. and although the Word be indifferent in it self, yet where it is taken for a combination of men together against an established Religion and lawful Authority (as it was by the Jews when they charged the Christians under this name) then it implies in it a twofold accusation : 1. Of Novelty and Singularity. 2. Of Faction and Sedition.

1. Of Novelty. A *Seet* or Heresie in this sense implies in it, mens setting up with a new Doctrine which was not heard of before ; and making that the Foundation of a new Society separate and distinct from the established Church , and consequently they must charge the Church they are di-

vided from with errors and corruptions, or they make themselves guilty of Schism, *i. e.* unnecessary separation. Now upon these two grounds the Jews laid the imputation of a *New Sect* upon the *Nazarenes* or *Christians*, 1. Because they could not shew a visible succession in all Ages : 2. Because they could not prove the Jewish Church to be guilty of such errors and corruptions as to need a Reformation.

1. They could not shew a Succession in all Ages of such persons who agreed in all things with them. "For where (say they) were the men to be found in former Ages, that taxed the Jewish Church with such errors and corruptions as *Jesus* of Nazareth did? that bid men *beware of the leaven of the Scribes and Pharisees*, *i. e.* of the most learned and holy men. Had not God alwayes a Visible Church among them? they could produce the names of their High Priests in every Age, and shew them all the marks of a Visible Church: For in Judah was God known, and his Name was great in Israel. Hath not God said, that in his House at Hierusalem he would put his Name for ever; and his eyes and his heart should be there perpetually? How is it then possible

Psal. 76. 1. " Church: For in Judah was God known, and
Deut. 12.] " his Name was great in Israel. Hath not God
11. " said, that in his House at Hierusalem he would
2 Kings 21. " put his Name for ever; and his eyes and his heart
7. " should be there perpetually? How is it then
2 Chron. 7. 16. " possible

“ possible but there must be a constant and
 “ visible Succession in all Ages? since God
 “ would alwayes have a people to dwell
 “ among ; and that might be known to be
 “ his people by the outward marks and
 “ signs of a true Church. But if the Chri-
 “ stians pretences held good, God must for
 “ several Ages have wanted a Church
 “ amongst them. For none of those things
 “ which they charged the Jews with, were
 “ newly crept in among them, but had been
 “ delivered down to them by the Tradition
 “ of their Fore-fathers, in an uninterrupted
 “ manner, as they thought, from the very
 “ time of *Moses*. This was their Rule
 “ whereby they guided themselves in their
 “ actions of Religion, and in the sense of
 “ obscure places of the Law and the Pro-
 “ phets; and in that time after the cessation
 “ of Prophecy, when the Christians sup-
 “ posed these corruptions to have come in
 “ among them, they could draw down a
 “ constant Succession from *the men of the*
 “ *great Synagogue*, of persons eminent
 “ for Learning and Piety that never charged
 “ them with any such corruptions as *Jesus*
 “ of *Nazareth* and his Disciples did. Would
 “ God ever suffer such dangerous errors,
 “ hypo-

"hypocrisie, and superstitions to prevail in
 "his own Church, and raise up no Per-
 "sons to discover these things, till these
 "new Teachers and Reformers arose ?
 "Were not *Hillel* and *Shammai* that so accu-
 "rately discussed all the niceties of the Law,
 "able to find out such gross and open
 "corruptions, if any such had been among
 "us ? Might not we say, *that not only the*
V. Bell. de "Teachers, but God himself had slept all
not. Eccles. "that time, if he raised up no one Person
l. 4. c. 5. "to discover the coming in of such errors
§. praterca. "and corruptions ? Where had God then
 "any true Church in the world, if not
 "among his people of the Jews ? And
 "would he suffer that to be overspread
 "with such a Leprosie, and send none of
 "his Priests to discover it ? And even by
 "the confession of the Christians them-
 "selves, they were once the beloved and
 "chosen people of God, how or when was
 "it that they ceased to be so ? Do not
 "themselves acknowledge, that they re-
 "ceive the Law and the Prophets from our
Rom. 3. 2. "hands ? And that to us were committed the
 "Oracles of God, and that to us pertained the ado-
9. 4. 5. "ption, and the glory, and the Covenants, and
 "the giving of the Law, and the service of God
 "and

“ and the promises, and that ours are the Fathers ?
 “ How is it then possible after all these pri-
 “ viledges, to suppose this Church to fall
 “ into such a degeneracy, as at last to be cast
 “ off by God, and a new Church to arise out
 “ of the ashes of it ? Thus we may reason-
 ably suppose the Jews to have argued for
 themselves ; and on the other side, they
 trampled upon and despised this new Sect of
 the *Nazarenes*, “ That had nothing of the
 “ Pomp and Splendour of their Church :
 “ they had only a company of mean and il-
 “ literate persons at first to joyn with them ;
 “ the Disciples of their Master were a sort
 “ of poor Fishermen and inconsiderable per-
 “ sons, men of no Authority, or reputation
 “ for extraordinary Sanctity or Learning :
 “ even their Master himself was one of no
 “ great severity of life, that did not retire
 “ from the world, and lead an abstracted life,
 “ but conversed with Publicans and Sinners,
 “ and put not his Disciples upon Fasting and
 “ long Prayers ; whereas the Pharisees were
 “ men of great austerity and mortification,
 “ much exercised in devotion, making fre-
 “ quent and long prayers, at certain hours ;
 “ and in whatever place those hours took
 “ them. Now how is it possible to believe,
 “ that

“ that such devout persons as these are mi-
 “ staken, and the Sect of the *Nazarenes* only
 “ in the right? But besides all this, Where
 “ was their Church before *Jesus of Naza-*
 “ *reth*? We offer to produce a personal suc-
 “ cession on our side, that joyned in con-
 “ stant communion with us at the Temple
 “ at *Hierusalem*; let the Christians shew any
 “ number of men before themselves, that
 “ joyned with them in believing what they
 “ do, and rejecting the abuses which they
 “ tax among us: if they cannot do this, let
 “ them then suffer under the just imputati-
 “ on of Novelty.

2. “ But supposing they do not think it ne-
 “ cessary to assign a number of men di-
 “ stinct from our Society, but say it is
 “ enough that though they joyned with
 “ them in the worship of God, yet they
 “ did not in their corruptions: yet to vindic-
 “ cate themselves, they must shew how it
 “ was possible for such corruptions to come
 “ in, and no more notice be taken of
 “ them: Such things could not be intro-
 “ duced without some notable alteration;
 “ and in such a one, the author, the time,
 “ the place, the manner may be assigned:
 “ We can tell, say they, all these circum-
 “ stances

“stances in the Idolatries of *Jeroboam*, *Abab*,
 “and *Manasseh*; if so great alterations have hap-
 “ned in the state of our Church, that there is a
 “necessity of reforming it; name us the per-
 “sons, the time, the place, the manner how all
 “these corruptions came in. When came men
 “first to forsake the letter of the *Scripture*, and
 “adhere to *Tradition*? Who first brought in the
 “*Pharisaical* Superstitions? What was his name,
 “where was his abode, who first opposed and
 “condemned him? Were all men asleep then to
 “suffer such alterations, and to say nothing at
 “all against them? What, could one Genera-
 “tion conspire to deceive the next? and if not,
 “how could such changes happen in matters
 “of Religion, and no one take care to discover
 “it and prevent the infecting of posterity by it?
 “Had no persons any regard to God and the
 “purity of Religion then? If they had, would
 “they suffer strange fire to come upon Gods
 “Altar, and take no notice at all of it? Why did
 “not *Jesus of Nazareth*, when he so frequently
 “and vehemently declaimed against the *Phari-*
 “*saical* hypocrisy and superstitions, and false
 “Doctrines, shew to the people, when, and
 “where, and how these things came into
 “the Church of God? He only condemns them,
 “and speaks sharply against them, but he saith
 “not one word to satisfy the *Scientifical* men

“ among them, how it was possible for corrupti-
 “ ons to come in, and prevail to such a degree, and
 “ yet no circumstances of time or place be as-
 “ signable of it. Thus the Jews still believed
 themselves to be the only true, *antient, visible Ca-*
tholick and infallible Church of God, and despised the
 poor *Christians*, as a novel and upstart *Seēt of*
Nazarens ; which is the first imputation the
 Christians suffered under.

2. They suffered under the imputation of *Faction*
 and *Sedition*; which is the second thing implied in
 the name of *Seēt* or *Hereſie* here mentioned ; and
 that they charged upon them two wayes. 1. For
 not submitting to the Churches Authority. 2. For
 disturbing the peace and quiet of the People.

1. For *not submitting to the Churches Authority* :
 not, that the Disciples of our Lord did out of
 humour, or fancy, or only to make a party,
 break with the Jews in matters meerly of order
 and indifferency : no, on the contrary we find
 them extreamly cautious of giving any offence
 in such matters, which temper they learnt of
 their *Lord and Master*, who complied with ma-
 ny things, that others might not take advan-
 tage by his omission of them, to slight and
 Mat. 3. 15. contemn them ; thus when others were bap-
 tized of *John*, he would be so too ; not, that he
 had any need of washing away of sin : but he
 would not make use of a particular priviledge

to bring any discountenance upon a general duty. Thus we see, he went up at the solemn Feasts to *Hierusalem* as others did; and not only was present in the Temple, but vindicated by a Miracle the order and decency of it, by driving out the buyers and sellers from the outward parts of it, although they had a fair pretence of being ready at hand to serve the necessities of such as were to sacrifice to God in the Temple; nay, St. Mark tells us, that he would not suffer any vessel to be carried through the Temple: and this he did not upon any reason peculiar to the *Levitical Law*, but because it was a *House of Prayer*. And this example his Apostles followed, who after they had the *Holy Ghost* poured upon them, yet they attended the Temple at the hours of prayer. But most remarkable to this purpose, is the instance of St. Paul at that very time when he was seized upon, and like to be destroyed by the fury of the Jews. For, understanding at *Hierusalem* from St. James, that there were many thousands of believing Jews that were still zealous of the Law, and were informed that St. Paul among the Gentiles slighted *circumcision* and the *Levitical Customs*; he to give them all reasonable satisfaction that he intended to make no unnecessary breach among them about indifferent matters, submits himself to a legal purification in the Temple for seven dayes together; before

Mat. 21. 12.

Mar. 11. 16.

Acts 3. 7.

Acts 21.
20, 21.

Ver. 7.

the end of which, the Jews made a tumult and seized upon him, and so he was brought to answer the accusations against him in this Chapter. Thus careful St. Paul was to give no ground for suspicion that he delighted in disorders and separations; this example he did leave to all prudent Christians, rather to submit to things which they have no great value for (as no doubt at this time St. Paul had very little for the *Levitical Customs*) than to hazard the breaking the peace of the Church for such matters. But notwithstanding all this care of the first Christians, they could not avoid the imputation of *Faction*; because they would not entirely submit their judgements to the Authority of the Jewish Church. For this was the great pretence they stood upon, that they were the *Governours* of the Church by *Gods own institution*, that they were to explain and interpret the *Law and the Prophets*; and this was expressed in the beginning of their Law, *That in all cases of difficulty they were to go up to the place which the Lord their God should chuse; and to go to the Priests, and the Levites, and to the Judge, and they shall shew thee the sentence of judgement.* And thou shalt do according to the sentence which they of that place (which the Lord shall chuse) shall shew thee, and thou shalt observe to do according to all that they inform thee; and the man that will do presumptuously, and will not hearken to the Priest,

Deut. 17. 8,

9, 10, 11,

12.

Priest, (that standeth to minister there before the Lord thy God) or unto the Judge, even that man shall dye, and thou shalt put away the evil from Israel. Upon this place, they might certainly much better establish the infallibility of their own Church, than others draw an argument for Infallibility in the Christian Church from it. However, absolute obedience would serve their turn, to charge the Christians with *Faction*, in not submitting to their Authority. “ For, was not this a
 “ matter of difficulty, whether the Messias were
 “ to be a temporal Prince or not? concerning
 “ what time, and place, and person the Prophe-
 “ cies were to be understood? Who were the
 “ competent Judges in this case, but those whom
 “ God had established by his Law? If the Scribes
 “ and Pharisees were charged with false glosses,
 “ and corrupting the Law by their Traditions,
 “ the Christians were not to take upon them-
 “ selves to judge of them; but to appeal to
 “ the High Priest and the *Sanhedrin*, who were
 “ the only lawful Judges in these matters:
 “ Their duty was submission and patience; but
 “ by no means ought they upon their own
 “ Authority to begin a new Church, and to
 “ broach new Doctrines directly contrary to the
 “ judgement of the High Priest and *Sanhedrin*;
 “ yea, after they had pronounced Sentence
 “ against *Jesus of Nazareth*, and condemned him.

"to death ; and excommunicated his follow-
 "ers, and punished as many as they could get
 "into their power ; what could it (in their opi-
 "nion) be but the Spirit of Faction and diso-
 "bedience thus to oppose the Authority of
 "their Church, in believing contrary to its de-
 "crees, and reforming without any power de-
 "rived from it ? We see in our Saviours time
 how severely they checked any of the people
 who spake favourably of Christ and his Do-
 ctrine ; As though the poor ignorant people
 were fit to judge of these matters ! to under-
 stand Prophecies, and to know the true Messias,
 when he should appear ! And therefore when
 some of their Officers that had been sent to ap-
 prehend him, came back with admiration of him,
 and said, *Never man spake like this man*, they take
 them up short and tell them, *They must believe as*
the Church believes ; what, they take upon them to
 judge of such matters ! No, they must submit
 to their Governours : *Have any of the Rulers, or*
Pharisees believed on him ? but this people which know
not the Law are cursed. i e. When they set up their
 own judgement in opposition to the Authority
 of the Church. And after our Saviours death
 at a solemn Council at *Hierusalem*, when Peter
 and John were summoned before them ; the first
 Question they asked was, *By what power, or by*
what name have ye done this ? They never enquired,
 whether

Joh. 7. 46,

47, 48, 49.

Acts 4. 7.

whether the Miracle were wrought or no, or whether their Doctrine were true; all their Question was about their Mission, whether it were ordinary or extraordinary; or what authority they could pretend to, that were not sent by themselves; but let the things be never so true, which they said, if they could find any flaw in their Mission according to their own Rules and Laws, this they thought sufficient ground to forbid them to preach any more, and to charge them with Faction if they disobeyed.

2. They charged the Christians with *Faction* in being *so active and busie* to promote Christianity to the great disturbance of the Jews in all parts. This *Tertullus* accused St. Paul of, *that he was a mover of sedition among all the Jews throughout the world*; and accordingly the Jews at *Thessalonica* take the Christians by force and carry them to the Rulers of the City, crying, *Those that have turned the world upside down are come hither also*. This they knew was the most effectual course to render them odious to all Governours, who are apt to suspect all new things as dangerous, and think no truth can compensate the hazard of alterations. Thus it was especially among the *Roman Governours*, who had learnt from the counsel given to *Augustus*, to be particularly jealous of all innovations in Religion; and had much rather the people should continue quiet under

Ver. 5.

Acts 17. 6.

under an old error, than have the peace disturbed for the greatest Truth. This was really the greatest difficulty in the way of Christianity, it came no where, but people were possessed before hand with quite other apprehensions of Religion, than the Christians brought among them. The Jewish and Pagan Religions were in possession in all places, and the people were at ease in the practice of them. What then must the Christians do ? Must they let them alone and not endeavour to convince them of the truth of their own Doctrine ? If so, they are unfaithful to their trust, betrayers of truth, and false to the Souls of men : if they go about to perswade men out of their Religion, they know, such is the fondness most men have for their own opinions, especially in Religion, that where they might hope to convince *one*, they might be sure to enrage *many*; especially of those whose interest lay in upholding the old Religion. How little doth Reason signify with most men, where Interest is against it ! Truth and falsehood are odd kind of Metaphysical things to them, which they do not care to trouble their heads with ; but what makes for or against their Interest, is thought easie and substantial. All other matters are as *Gallio* said, *questions of names and words*, which they care not for ; but no men will sooner offer to demonstrate a thing to be false, than they

they who know it to be against their interest to believe it to be true. This was the case of these great men of the Jews that came down to accuse *Paul*; they easily saw whither this new Religion tended, and if it prevailed among their people, farewell then to all the *Pomp* and *Splendour* of the *High-Priesthood* at *Hierusalem*; farewell then to the *Glory* of the *Temple* and *City* whither all the *Tribes* came up to worship thrice a year; farewell then to all the riches, and ease, and pleasure which they enjoyed: And what was the greatest Truth and best Religion in the world to them, in comparison with these? These were sufficient reasons to them to accuse Truth it self of deceiving men, and the most peaceable Doctrine of laying the Foundation of Faction and Sedition. Thus we have considered the false imputations which were cast upon Christianity at first, implied in these words, *After the way which is called heresie.*

2. I now come to the way taken by *St. Paul* to remove these false imputations, which he doth,

1. By an appeal to Scripture, as the ground and rule of his faith, *Believing all things which are written in the Law and the Prophets.*

2. By an appeal to the best and purest Antiquity, as to the object of Worship; *So worship I the God of my Fathers*, not bringing in any new Religion, but restoring it to its primitive purity.

1. *By an appeal to Scripture as the ground and rule of his faith.* The Jews pleaded *Possession, Tradition, Authority of the present Church* : against all these St. Paul fixes upon a certain and unmoveable Foundation, *the Law and the Prophets*. He doth not here insist upon any particular revelation made to himself, but offers the whole matter in dispute to be tryed by a common Rule that was allowed on both sides. And his meaning is, if they could prove that he either asserted, or did any thing contrary to *the Law and the Prophets*, then they had some reason to accuse him of innovation, or beginning of a *new Sect*; but if the foundation of his doctrine and practice lay in what themselves acknowledged to be from God, then they had no cause to charge him with introducing a *new Sect* among them.

But the great Question here is, "What ground
 "St. Paul had to decline the *Authority of the present*
 "*Church*? Since God himself had appointed the
 "Priests to be the interpreters of the Law; and
 "therefore in doubtful cases resort was to be
 "made to them; and not the judgement left to
 "particular persons about the sense of Scri-
 "pture; and yet in this case it is apparent
 St. Paul declined all Authority of the present
 Church; for at that very time the *High Priests*
 and *Elders* came down to accuse him, and he takes
 not the least notice of their judgement in this
 matter.

matter. I shall therefore now shew that St. Paul had very great reason so to do, and to appeal only to *Scripture*.

1. Because the Authority of the present Church was more lyable to error and mistake, than the Rule of Scripture was.

2. Because it was lyable to more partiality, than that was.

1. Because it was more lyable to *error and mistake*, than the Rule of Scripture was. It was agreed on both sides, that the Law was from God, and that *the Prophets spake by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost*; all that was now left was only to find out the true meaning of them, and to compare Prophecies with events. As in the case of the *Messias*, if the circumstances foretold by the *Prophets* had their exact accomplishment in Christ, as might appear to those who carefully compared them; *If he were born at Bethlehem, of the Tribe of Judah, when the Scepter was departed from it, and during the second Temple*, and all other circumstances agreeing; then though the ordinary judgement concerning true *Prophets* belonged to the *Sanhedrin*, yet it was far more reasonable to believe that they were mistaken, than that all the Prophecies should be accomplished in a person that was not the true *Messias*. For those Prophecies were not intended only for the *Priests* and *Rulers*, but for directions to the People, that

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they

they might be able to judge of the accomplishment of them: otherwise when the *Authority* of the *Jewish Church* condemned our *Saviour*, the People could have no reason to believe him to be the *Messias*; if they were bound in the *sense* of *Scripture* to submit their judgement wholly to the Churches *Authority*. It is plain then, that the *sense* of *Scripture* may be so evident to private capacities, that they are not to submit in it to the *present Authority* of a *Church*. For notwithstanding all the promises made to the *Jewish Church*, and the command of submitting to the sentence of their *Priests and Rulers*, in a matter of the highest concernment, *viz.* concerning the true *Messias*, men were bound to believe directly contrary to the present *Authority* in the *Church*. For the people were bound to believe *Christ* to be the true *Messias*; although the *High Priest and Elders* had condemned him for a *deceiver and malefactor*. But besides this particular case, there may be several others wherein men may lawfully reject the *Authority* of the *present Church*; and those are, when that *Authority* shall go about to overthrow those things which must be supposed antecedent to the belief of any such *Authority*: as, 1. The common sense of mankind. 2. The force of a divine Law. 3. The liberty of judgement concerning truth and falsehood. All these must necessarily be supposed

posed before any Authority of a Church ; but if any Church goes about to overthrow these, it thereby forfeits its own Authority over men.

1. If it requires things contrary to common sense ; as in that instance wherein some of the *Jewish Rabbies* required submission to their Authority, *viz.* in believing the right hand to be the left, or the left to be the right, if they determined so ; or supposing the Jews to have required the people to deny that they ever saw any Miracle wrought by Christ ; or in the Miracle of the Loaves, that what they saw and handled, and tasted, to be bread was true bread ; or to say, that the same individual body might be in a thousand places at once, or that things whose nature it is to be in another, can subsist without their proper subject ; what Church soever requires such things as these from its members to be believed, gives them just reason to reject its Authority.

2. If it requires things contrary to the force and reason of a divine Law : as the Jews themselves would have acknowledged, if any Authority among them had gone about either to have left out the second Commandment, or made it lawful to give Religious worship to Images, under any distinctions whatsoever : or if the Priests had taken away from the people their share in the sacrifices, under pretence of the *unsanctified*

teeth, or the *long beards* of the Laity, which were not fit to touch what had been offered in sacrifice to God. But we need not put cases among them, for our Saviour therefore bids men *have a care of the leaven of the Scribes and Pharisees*, because by *their traditions they made the Commandment of God of none effect*: as in their *Corban*, if they made a vow to God they thought themselves excused from relieving their Parents; and in this way our Saviour generally deals with them, shewing that though they pretended to keep the letter of the Law; yet by their corrupt additions and false glosses they overthrew the scope and design of it: which he thought sufficient reason to reject their Authority; and therefore when he bids his Disciples, *observe and do whatsoever the Scribes and Pharisees bid them*; it must be supposed to be only while they keep to the letter and reason of the Law; for if he had intended an absolute obedience, he would never elsewhere bid his Disciples *beware of their Doctrine*.

3. If it takes away all liberty of judgement concerning truth and falshood in Religion. For this is a natural right which every man hath to judge for himself: and they that take this away, may as well command all men to put out their eyes, that they may better follow their Guides. But the other is so much worse, because it is an assault upon our understandings, it is a robbing

us of the greatest talent God hath committed to our management, it is a rape upon our best faculties, and prostituting them to the lusts of Spiritual Tyrants; it is not *captivating our understandings to the obedience of faith*, but enslaving them to the proud and domineering usurpations of men; wherein they would do by us as the *Philistins* did by *Sampson*; they would put out our eyes, that we might grind in their prison, and make them sport. I would not be mistaken, it is the liberty of judgement I plead for, and not of practice; that may be justly restrained by the Laws of the Church, where the other is allowed; because the obligations to peace and unity are different from those to faith and inward assent. And that no absolute submission of judgement could be required by the Law of *Moses*, notwithstanding the command of outward obedience in the cases mention'd, *Dent. 17. 8, 9, &c.* is most evident from hence, because that Law makes provision for a *sin-offering in case* Lev. 4. 13. *the whole Congregation of Israel sin through ignorance, and the thing be hid from the eyes of the Assembly, or Supream Council, and they have done something against the commandment of the Lord: which had been a Law made to no purpose, if it had been impossible for their chief Authority to have erred or been mistaken in their judgement. From hence we see St. Paul had great reason to appeal*
from

from the *High Priest and Elders to the Law and the Prophets*, because they were subject to error and mistake, but these are not.

2. Because *the Law and the Prophets* are less liable to partiality, than a living Judge, or the Authority of the present Church. I have oft-times wondered to hear men speak so advantageously of a *living Judge*, before an *Infallible Rule*, in order to the end of Controversies. If all they mean be only that *an end be put to them no matter how*, I confess a *living Judge* in that case hath much the advantage, but so would any other way that persons would agree upon, as the judgement of the next person we met with, or Lottery, or any such thing; but if we would have things fairly examined and heard, and a judgement given according to the merits of the cause, the case will be found very different here from what it is in civil causes. For here the Judge must be a party concerned, when his own Authority and interest is questioned; and lyable to all those passions which men are subject to in their own cases. Which will be notoriously evident in the case before us, between the *High Priest and Elders* on one side, and *St. Paul* on the other: They pleaded, that if any difficulty arose about the sense of the Law, it belonged to them to judge of it; *St. Paul* declines their judgement, and appeals only to *the Law and the Prophets*: had it been reasonable

sonable in this case for *Felix* to have referred the judgement to them who were the parties so deeply concerned ? A living Judge may have a great advantage over a bare Rule to put an end to controversies ; but then we must suppose impartiality in him , freedom from prejudice, an excellent judgement, diligence and patience in hearing all the evidence , and at last delivering sentence according to the sense of the Law ; if any of these be wanting , the controversy may soon be ended , but on the wrong side. I suppose none of those who would have controversies in Religion ended by a living Judge, will for shame say , they would have them ended right or wrong ; but if they would have Truth determined , they must give us assurance, that these Judges shall lay aside all partiality to their own interests , all prejudice against their Adversaries , shall diligently search, and examine, and weigh the evidence on both sides , and then shall determine according to the true sense of the Law. How likely this is will appear by the living Judges in our Saviours time ; Was there ever greater partiality seen than was in them , or more obstinate prejudice , or more wilful errors, or a more malicious sentence than came from them in the cause of our Lord and Saviour ? They would not believe his Miracles,

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cles, though told them by those that saw them; when they saw them, they would not believe they came from God, but attributed them to the Devil; they would not so much as enquire the true place of his Nativity, but ran on still with that wilful mistake, *that he was born in Galilee*; and by this they thought to confound *Nicodemus* presently, *Search and look, for out of Galilee ariseth no Prophet*. If they had searched and looked themselves, they would have found, that Christ was born in *Bethlehem*, and not in *Galilee*. But where men are strongly prejudiced, any thing serves for evidence and demonstration; whereas all the arguments on the other side shall be despised and contemned. How captious were they on all occasions towards our Saviour, lying in wait to entrap him with questions, to pervert his words, and draw blasphemy out of the most innocent expressions? And when none of all these things could do, they use all the wayes of fraud, malice and injustice to destroy the Saviour of the world as a Malefactor and Blasphemer. Was not here now a mighty advantage, which the Authority of the present Church among the Jews of that time had, above the guidance of the Law and the Prophets? And the knowledge St. Paul had of the same temper being in them still might justly make him decline their judgement, and appeal only

only to the Law and the Prophets, for the ground and Rule of his faith.

2. For the object of his worship, he appeals to the best Antiquity, I worship the God of my Fathers. i. e. I bring no new Religion among you, but the very same in substance with that which all the Jews have owned; so some render τῷ πατρίῳ θεῷ Deo Patrio, the God whom all my Brethren acknowledge, but he rather understands it of the same God that was worshipped by Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, quem majores nostri coluerunt; so St. Peter in his preaching to the people concerning the resurrection of Christ, to avoid the imputation of Novelty, saith, the God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our Fathers hath glorified his Son Jesus; and again to the Sanhedrim he saith, the God of our Fathers raised up Jesus; and St. Paul, the God of our Fathers hath chosen thee; in the use of which expressions they purposely declare that they had no thoughts of bringing in any new Religion among them, contrary to what God had of old declared to the Patriarchs. The main things in which the Jews objected innovation to them, did either concern the bringing in some new doctrine, or the reformation of corruptions among them.

1. For their doctrine; that either concerned the Messias, or a future state. For the doctrine of the Messias it was as antient as the records of any revelation from God were. It was the great promise

Acts 3. 13.

5. 30.

22. 14.

mise made to the Patriarchs long before the Law
 of Moses; and even Moses himself speaks of him,
 as St. Steven proves to them; and David, and Isaiah,
 and Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, and Daniel, and Micah,
 and Malachi, as the Apostles at large prove in their
 writings. Why should this then be accounted any
 new doctrine which they all believed and re-
 ceived? If the Question be only whether Christ
 were that *Messias* or no; for that, they desire no-
 thing more than the testimony of the Law and
 the Prophets, and the Miracles wrought by him; but
 they had no reason to quarrel with them upon
 their belief, for such an alteration of the state of
 things which themselves believed must be when
 the *Messias* came; for in him not only the Nation
 of the Jews, but all the Nations of the earth were to be
 blessed; which was inconsistent with supposing
 the Ceremonial Law to continue in its force and
 obligation; being particularly suited to one peo-
 ple lying within such a compass as they might
 three times a year attend upon the service in the
 Temple at *Hierusalem*. If their quarrel was, con-
 cerning a future state, as though that were a new
 doctrine, St. Paul adds in the next Verse, that them-
 selves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the
 dead both of the just and the unjust. And in his defence
 before Agrippa he saith, And now I stand and am judged
 for the hope of the promise made of God unto our Fathers,
 unto which promise our twelve Tribes instantly serving God
 day

Acts 7. 37.

Acts 26. 6.

7.

day and night hope to come. So that the Apostle produces *Antiquity, Universality* and *Consent* in these Fundamental Articles of the Christian Religion; only a late buffe and Politick Faction of the *Saducees* opposed this doctrine; but why should their opposition signify any thing against so full a stream running down from the first and purest *Antiquity*? Thus much for the positive part of their faith and doctrine.

2. For the negative part, or the reformation of *abuses and corruptions* among them; this was *S. Pauls* plea; Let them shew where the God of our Fathers imposed any of those heavy burdens which the Scribes and Pharisees place so much of their Religion in. What ground is there in the *Law and the Prophets*, for the Pharisaical Superstitions, and Vows, and severities to themselves in fetching blood and knocking their heads against the walls, and different garbs and dresses to appear more holy unto men, with many other customs of theirs, the observation of which was made so great a part of the Religion of their devoutest men? And it is a strange thing they should think it impossible such things should come in among them, without great notice being taken of it; for although sudden and violent changes may have all the circumstances known, yet it is not to be expected in more insensible & gradual alterations. A man may tell when a violent Feaver seized up-

on him and inflamed his blood, but he cannot do so by a Hectick or a Consumption; must he therefore believe himself well, because he cannot tell the punctual time when he fell sick. We may easily describe the circumstances of a Landflood which overflows the banks, and bears all before it, but we cannot do so by the coming in of the Tide, which steals in secretly and insensibly, and no man can assign the place where the salt and fresh water first mix together. Superstition is a Hectick Feaver to Religion, it by degrees consumes the vitals of it, but comes on insensibly, and is not easily discovered till it be hard to be cured. At first, it may be some devout but indiscreet men made way for it, who love to find out some Modes of devotion different from the rest of the world, which are greedily embraced by such who admire and follow them; this example taking, another begins and sets up for a more refined way than the former; and so the design spreads, till at last true piety and goodness be swallowed up by superstitious fopperies. Which is the most probable account of all the Pharisaical corruptions; some of whose observations might be begun at first with a good mind, and by the devout persons of that time, but afterwards, every one that had a sower look and a worse nature than ordinary, thought it not enough to follow the example of others, but like
a great

a great *Physician* he must have his *Nostrum's*, something of his own finding out, a new garb, or ceremony, or posture of devotion, whereby he may be taken notice of, and admired for his sanctity. Thus that fardle of superstitious rites was gathered up among the *Scribes* and *Pharisees* in our *Saviour's* time, whom he most severely upon all occasions rebukes for their hypocrisy, in placing so much of their Religion in them. And thus much for the way taken by *St. Paul* to vindicate Christianity from the imputations of being a new *Sect* or *Heresie*, by an appeal to *Scripture* and the best *Antiquity*.

3. There remains only, the freedom and courage expressed by him in owning his Religion, notwithstanding these false imputations. But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which is called heresie, &c. He abhorred that mean and base-spirited principle, which makes it lawful for men to deny their Religion when it brings them into danger; he studied no secret arts of compliance with his Adversaries to secure himself; he did not decline appearing, though to the hazard of his life in so just a cause. He valued his Religion beyond his own safety, and regarded not all the calumnies and reproaches of his enemies, as long as he made this his constant exercise, to keep a conscience Ver. 16. void of offence, both towards God and towards men. And this he elsewhere saith afforded him more inward com-

2 Cor. 1.
12.

comfort and satisfaction, than all the crafts and policy in the world could give him. *For our rejoicing is this, saith he, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God we have had our conversation in the world.* There is nothing inspires men with so much courage, as integrity and uprightness of mind doth; and such persons who have the comfort of that, have not only better hopes as to another world, but oft-times escape better as to this, than others do; for even their enemies cannot but esteem them: whereas the fawning, sneaking and flattering hypocrite that will do or be any thing for his own advantage, is despised by those he courts, hated by good men, and at last tormented by his own conscience, for being false to God and Religion. But we may see here in *St. Paul* a great instance of true *Christian magnanimity*; he was sensible how great both the malice and quality of his enemies were; he knew he was to answer before a Judge, that regarded nothing either of Justice or Religion; yet he neither flatters his Judge, nor betrayes any distrust of him: he doth not bespatter his enemies, nor discover any fear of them; but with a modest freedom and manly courage owns the main part of their accusation, and effectually vindicates his own innocence and his Religion together. For even *Felix* himself, although a man
other-

otherwise very capable of being wrought upon by some wayes of address, of which we read, *Ver. 16.* yet the *High Priest* and the *Elders* with their eloquent *Tertullus* were forced to return as they came, and leave *St. Paul* under the name of a *Prisoner*, but enjoying the conveniencies of *liberty*, *ver. 23.*

I have now gone thorough all the parts of the Text, with a respect to *St. Paul* and the Authority of the *Jewish Church*, which was engaged against him; it may now be justly expected that I make *Application* of what I have said to our own *State and Condition*. Thanks be to God, we are not brought to such a tryal as *St. Paul* was, we enjoy the liberty of speaking for our selves and our Religion, and not only speaking for it, but professing and owning it. And, may we ever do so! But we have busie and restless Adversaries abroad, the factors of the *High Priest* and *Elders* at *Rome*, who have as much spight and malice against us, as ever those of *Hierusalem* had against *St. Paul*; and they have their *Tertullus's* too, men of art and insinuation, and who manage their cause against us just as he did against *St. Paul*, they charge us with bringing in *new Sects* under the pretence of *Reformation*; or with rejecting the Authority of the present Church which we were bound to obey,

and thereby laying the Foundation of *Faction* and *Schism*. These are heavy charges, but they are no other than those the *High Priest* and the *Elders* made against *St. Paul*; and thanks be to God, his *Defence* and *Vindication* is ours too, for we appeal to *Scripture* and the best and purest *Antiquity*; and desire to be judged according to these. These three things therefore I shall speak to, before I conclude.

1. That the same reasons which they produce against the *Reformation* would have held against the spreading of Christianity at first.

2. That the same *Defence* which *St. Paul* made for Christianity will justify the *Reformation*.

3. That we have all reason to follow the courage of *St. Paul* in owning and defending our Religion, notwithstanding the imputations which are cast upon it.

1. That the same reasons which they produce against the *Reformation* would have held against *Christianity* at first. What have all the clamours of our Adversaries for above a hundred years come to, but the very same which I have already mentioned as the Jews Objections against Christianity, viz. *Novelty*, and *Faction*? "Where was your Church before the *Reformation*? produce your succession."
"in

"in all Ages of persons who agreed in all
 "things with you. Where were those distinct
 "bodies of men who found fault with those
 "corruptions that you pretend to reform ?
 "Our Church hath had a constant and glori-
 "ous succession of Bishops, and Martyrs, and
 "Confessors, and Religious Orders of Men,
 "Virgins, and Widows. But supposing such
 "a distinct succession were not necessary, yet
 "shew how it was possible for so ma-
 "ny errors and corruptions to come into
 "the Church, and no one take notice of them
 "and discover them. Where was the watch-
 "full eye of Providence over the Church all
 "this while ? What, all the Pastors asleep
 "at once ! or all conspiring together to de-
 "ceive their posterity ! Besides, how can the
 "Protestants ever answer their rejecting the
 "Authority of the present Church which they
 "lived under ? and to whom God had promi-
 "sed his infallible Spirit ? how can they clear
 "themselves from faction and disturbing the
 "peace of the Christian world, which lived
 "in so great unity and peace before ? This
 "is the summ of their Objections against the
 "Reformation, which are the very same we have
 "mention'd before, as produced by the Jews
 "against Christianity. If the arguments are
 "good now, they were so then ; if they were

good then, for all that I can see the *High Priest* and *Elders* were in the right, and *St. Paul* in the wrong; if they were not good then, but are now, some remarkable disparity must be shewed between their case and ours; and that must lye in shewing these three things.

1. That the Christian Church hath greater infallibility promised than the Jewish had.

2. That the first Christians had greater reason to reject the Authority of that Church, than the Reformers had, as to the Church of *Rome*.

3. That the Causes of corruptions in the *Jewish Church*, could not hold in the Christian. But if none of these can be made good, then the case will appear to be the very same.

1. It cannot be proved that the *Christian Church* hath greater infallibility promised than the *Jewish* had. Of which we have this plain evidence, that one of the strongest arguments produced for the infallibility of the *Christian Church* is taken from the Promises made to the *Jewish*. How often hath *Deut. 17. 8, 9, 10.* been made Use of to prove infallibility in the *Christian Church*? If they had any better arguments in the New Testament, would they ever run so far back to a Command that most evidently relates to the *Jewish* constitution?

tion? Where hath ever God promised that he would dwell in *St. Peters* at *Rome*, as he did, that he would dwell in his Temple at *Hierusalem*? What boastings and triumphs would there have been, if any such words had been in the *Gospel* concerning *Rome*, as there were of old concerning *Hierusalem*; viz. that God had *sanctified* it, that his Name might be there for ever; and his eyes and his heart should be there perpetually? What pittiful proofs in comparifon of this, are all those brought out of the New Testament for the Authority and Infallibility of the *Roman Church*? What are all the promises of the Spirit made to the Apostles, and remarkably accomplished in them, to this plain promise of Gods particular presence in that place for ever? Suppose *St. Peter* had priviledges above the rest of the *Apostles*; how comes the entail to be made to all his successors, and only at *Rome* and no where else? Where are the Deeds kept, that contain this gift? Why are they not produced during all this contest? And yet we see in the *Jewish Church* where such a promise was made to a particular place, no such thing as Infallibility was implied in it.

2 Chron. 7.
16.

2. It cannot be shewed, that the first *Christians* had greater reason to reject the Authority of the *Jewish Church*, than our *Reformers*

mers had to reject that of the Church of Rome. I know here it will be presently said, *That the Apostles saw the Miracles of Christ, and wrought many themselves, and received an immediate Commission from Jesus Christ in whom the Churches Infallibility was then seated.* All which I grant to be true in it self, but cannot be pleaded by them who contend for absolute obedience to the present Churches Authority as infallible. My reason is, because upon this principle they could not believe Christ to be the true *Messias*; for his being the true *Messias* depended upon two things, *viz. the fulfilling of Prophecies, and the truth of his Miracles*; now according to their principles, no man could be certain of either of these without the Authority of the Church; for the fulfilling of Prophecies depended upon the sense of many obscure places of Scripture, about which they say there is a necessity of an infallible Judge; and for Miracles, they tell us, that there is no certain way of judging true and false, but by the Authority of the Church. Now if these things be so, what ground could the first Christians have to believe Christ to be the true *Messias*, when in both these, they must oppose the Authority of the present Church?

3. They can never prove, that the same causes of corruptions do not hold as to the
Chri-

Christian, which did as to the Jewish Church. For the *Christian Church* in those Ages which we charge with introducing the corruptions, was degenerated into greater *Ignorance*, *Barbarism*, *Luxury* and *Superstition*, than the *Jewish Church* in the time of its darkness from the cessation of *Prophecy* till the coming of Christ. Our Adversaries themselves confess, that for a long time, there was nothing either of Learning or Humanity among them; nothing but ease, and luxury, and ambition, and all manner of Wickedness among the Chief Rulers among them; nay, even at Rome there was a succession of fifty of their *High Priests*, so remarkable for their wickedness, that *Annas* and *Caiaphas* (setting only aside their condemning Christ) were *Saints* in comparison of them. And is it now any wonder that such errors and corruptions should come into that Church, as those we charge them with? Nay, rather the greatest Wonder seems to be, that any thing of Christianity should be preserved among them. But besides the *sottishness* of those times, we have many other causes to assign of the corruptions introduced among them; as, a *Compliance with Gentilism* in many of their Customs and Superstitions; *Affectation of new Modes of Devotion*, among indiscreet Zealots; *Ambition* and constant endeavour to advance

vance the Authority and Interests of the Priesthood above all Secular Power ; and when for a long time these had been gathering the rude materials together , then the *Moorish Philosophy* happening to creep in among them , the *Monks* began to busie themselves therein , and by the help of that , a little better to digest that Mass and heap of corruptions , and to spend the wit they had to defend and improve them.

2. But against all these , we stand upon the same defence that *St. Paul* did : we appeal to *Scripture* , and the *best and purest Antiquity*. We pretend to bring in no new Doctrines , and therefore no *Miracles* can be required of us ; which the *Apostles* wrought to confirm Christ's being the true *Messias* who was to alter that State which God himself had once appointed : All that we plead for , is that the Religion established by Christ may serve our turn , and that which is recorded by the Apostles and Evangelists ; to these we make our constant appeal , and have the same reason to decline the Authority of the *Roman Church* , that *St. Paul* had as to the *High Priest* and *Elders* , when he appealed to the *Law* and the *Prophets* : Nay , we have somewhat more reason ; because God had once appointed the *High Priests* and *Rulers* of the *People* among them , but the
Supre-

Supremacy of the *Roman Church* was a meer Usurpation begun by Ambition, advanced by Forgery, and defended by Cruelty. But we do not only believe all that is written in the *Law* and the *Prophets*, but we worship the God of our *Fathers*; of the *Fathers* of the first and purest *Ages* of the *Christian Church*; we are not only content to make use of their *Authority* in these matters, but we make our appeal to them; and have begged our Adversaries ever since the *Reformation*, to prove the points in difference between us, by the testimony of the first six hundred years; but from that time to this, they are as far from proving any one point, as ever they were.

3. What then follows from all this, but that we should imitate *St. Pauls* courage in owning and defending our Religion, notwithstanding all the false imputations which are cast upon it. What a shame would it be for us, meanly and basely to betray that Cause, for which our Ancestors sacrificed their lives? Is the *Romish Religion* any thing better than it was then? What error in *Doctrine*, or corruption in *Practice* have they ever reformed? Nay, have they not rather established and confirmed them more? Are they any thing kinder to us than they have been? No. Notwithstanding all their late

*Advocat of
Conscience-
Liberty, p.
236.247.*

pleadings for *Evangelical Peace and Charity*, they can at the same time tell us, That the Statutes against Hereticks are still in force against us, as condemned Hereticks; and we are not so dull, not to apprehend the meaning of that; viz. that were it in their power they could lawfully burn us to morrow. And is not this the height of *Evangelical Love and Sweetness*? Who can but admire the perswasiveness of such arguments to *Gospel-meekness*, and melt at the tenderness and bowels of an *Inquisition*? Let us not deceive our selves; it is not the mean compliance of any in going half way towards them, will serve their turn: there is no chewing their Pills, all must be swallowed together, or as good in their opinion to have none at all. For not only plain Hereticks, but the favourers and suspected of Heresie are solemnly excommunicated every year in the famous Bull of *Cæna Domini*; and Lindwood their *English Canonist*, tells us whom they account suspected of Heresie, viz. All that shew common civility to Hereticks, or give Alms to them, or that once hear their Sermons. This last indeed hath been mitigated by a considerable party among them; for notwithstanding the opposition of the Jesuits in this matter, and seven Brieves obtained by their means from several Popes forbidding all Roman-Catholicks

*Lindwood
Provenc.
l. 5. tit. de
heret.
p. 162. 2.*

to come to our Churches; yet the Secular Priests have contended for it as a thing lawful for them not only to come to our Prayers, and hear our Sermons, but to partake of our Sacraments too. Which they may allow, while they hope to carry on their interest better that way; but if once, (which God forbid) the Tide should turn with them, then the old Laws of their Church must prevail, and nothing will be thought so wholesome as an Inquisition. Which it is strange, their Advocates for Liberty of Conscience, should call only, *Laws in Catholick Countreys against Hereticks, and not Laws of the Church*, when there are extant above a hundred Bulls and Brieves of Popes establishing, confirming, and enlarging the Inquisition. Since then no favour is to be expected from their Church (for whatever they pretend, all the severity comes from thence, all the favour and mitigation from the clemency and Wisdom of Princes) let us endeavour to strengthen our selves, by a hearty zeal for our Religion, and using the best means to confirm and uphold it. And since the Children of this world are in their Generation wiser than the Children of light; there are some things practised among them which may deserve our imitation: and those are,

*Vertum.**Rom. p. 104, 105.**Advoc. for Lib. p. 24.**V. Append. ad Nicol.**Eymeric.**Director.**Inquisit.**Ven. 1607.*

1. A mighty Industry and Zeal in promoting their Cause ; they have learn'd of their Predecessors to *compass Sea and Land to gain one Profelyte*. They insinuate themselves into all companies, stick at no pains, accommodate themselves to all humours, and are provided one way or other to gratifie persons of all inclinations ; for they have retirement for the melancholy, business for the active, idleness for the lazy, honour for the ambitious, splendour for the vain, severities for the sower and hardy, and a good dose of pleasures for the soft and voluptuous. It is not their *Way*, but their *Zeal and Industry* I propound to our imitation ; I know not how it comes to pass, but so it often happens, that they who are most secure of truth on their side, are most apt to be remiss and careless ; and to comfort themselves with some good old sayings, as *God will provide*, and *Truth will prevail*, though they lye still, and do nothing towards it ; but certainly such negligence is inexcusable, where the matter is of so great importance, the Adversaries so many, and an account must be given shortly in another world, of what men have done or suffered for their Religion in this.

2. Submission

2. Submission and Obedience to their Spiritual Governours; the greatest strength of that prevailing Faction lyes in the close union and cohesion of all the parts together, by a settled subordination of one to another; which though not alwayes effectual, yet the contrivance is so laid, as if there were as much Truth and Reason as Policy in it, cannot be denyed to be fit for upholding the interest of a Church. But we plead not for their blind and absolute obedience; but sure the Apostles had some meaning when they bid the Christians *obey them that had the rule over them, and submit themselves; for they watched for their souls; and esteem them very highly in love for their Works sake:* not; be ready on all occasions to reproach and contemn them, and be glad of any idle stories wherewith to bespatter them. If men would once understand and practise the duties of humility, modesty, and submission to the Government which God hath set over us, we might have greater hopes to secure the interest of our Church and Religion, than without it we can ever have. For spiritual pride, conceitedness in Religion, and a Spirit of contradiction to Superiours are to be reckoned among some of the worst Symptoms of a declining Church.

Heb. 13. 17.

2 Thess. 5.

13.

3. Lessening of differences among themselves ; for although with all their care they cannot prevent them, yet they still endeavour to extenuate them, as much as possible, and boast of their Unity among strangers to their Churches affairs. The great wisdom of the *Court of Rome* lyes in this, that as long as persons are true to them in the main points wherein the difference lyes, they can let them alone in smaller differences among themselves; and not provoke either of the dissenting parties, unless they are sure to suppress them, lest they give them occasion to withdraw from their communion. They can allow different Rites and Ceremonies in the several Orders of Religion among them, and grant exemptions and priviledges in particular cases; as long as they make them serviceable to their common interest by upholding and strengthening them. Would to God we could at last learn this Wisdom from our enemies, not to widen our own differences by inveterate heats, bitterness and animosities among our selves; but to find out wayes whereby even the dissenters in smaller things may be made useful for the maintaining the common interest of our Church and Religion. And it is a vain thing in any to go about to separate these; or ever to hope that

that the *Protestant Religion* can be preserved among us without upholding the *Church of England*. For if once that *Bulwark* be demolished, our Adversaries will despise all the lesser *Sconces* and *Pallisado's*; they will be but like *Romulus* his *Walls*, which they will easily leap over at their pleasure. I pray God then (and I hope you will all joyn with me in it) that he would vouchsafe to our Governours the Spirit of Wisdom and Peace, to find out the most proper means for the establishment of our Church and Religion; and I pray God give us all a Spirit of knowledge to *understand the things which belong to our peace*, and of Love and Unity to endeavour after them.

F I N I S.

to endeavor after them
which leads to our peace, and of Love and Unity
all a spirit of knowledge which leads to
Church and Religion; and I pray God give us
proper means for the establishment of our
the of William's callings to find out the most
beholden ourselves to our Government and the
I hope you will all join with me in this
over our dear countrymen I pray God that (and
to which we are, which they will easily long
to see and know; they will be but like
of our Authorities will defend all the latter
of it once that I have been so demolish-
among us without violating the Church of the
these things I have written can be preserved

